

Report to the Washington State Legislature

Annual Report



State of Washington
**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION**

December 1, 2001

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
I. Progress of Schools, School Districts	4
A. Remarkable Progress Achieved in 4 th Grade Reading	
B. Creation of goals, support programs helped generate progress	
II. Progress of the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission.....	7
A. System Recommendations	
B. Goals	
C. Assistance Criteria	
D. Successful Schools Advisory Committee	
E. Detailed Assessment Reporting	
F. Achievement Gap Research	
III. Findings.....	14
A. Achievement Gap is Large, Persistent, Unacceptable	
B. English Language Learner Results	
C. Accountability in the 2001 Legislature	
D. State Delivers Focused Assistance Funding	
E. Accountability: Education Reform's Unfinished Work	
IV. Recommendations	28
A. Short Term Recommendations	
B. Long Term Recommendations	
V. Commission 2002 Workplan	39
A. Current Law	
B. Top Priorities for 2002	
C. Second Tier Objectives	
D. Resources	
Appendix: English Language Learner Program Effectiveness.....	48

Executive Summary

The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission is required to annually report its progress, findings and recommendations to the Legislature, the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. This is the first such report.

The 2001 results on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) reveal tremendous improvement in student achievement in the vital area of 4th grade reading. Schools and school districts with eleven or more students eligible to be tested on the 4th grade WASL were required by the Legislature to set improvement targets that sought to reduce by at least 25 percent the number of their students not meeting standard by 2001. Among schools large enough to participate, 62.5 percent met their reading goal, while 65 percent of the participating districts met their goals.

In 2001 the Commission adopted performance improvement goals for reading and mathematics at grades 4, 7 and 10. Schools and districts will be required to adopt goals that call for reducing the percentage of students not meeting standard by at least 25 percent by 2004, from their 2001 baseline. This marks the first time such goals have been established for high schools; they are first-time goals in 7th grade reading as well.

The Commission appreciates the Legislature's commitment in providing \$2.8 million to begin assisting struggling schools. This appropriation was an important first step in the direction proposed by the accountability legislation requested last session.

A primary focus of the Commission's research and analytical work over the past year has been the achievement gap. Children of African-American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American heritage continue to score far below the achievement levels reported for children of White or Asian/Pacific Islander backgrounds. On the reading and math WASL, this gap ranges from a low of 19.7 percentage points for American Indians in 7th

grade mathematics to a high of 31.8 points for African-Americans in 10th grade mathematics.

Short-term recommendations of the Commission call upon the Legislature to modify current authority to set performance improvement goals. The Commission seeks authority to set improvement goals for disproportionately underachieving sub-groups of students. The Commission also seeks authority to set goals for reducing dropout rates in middle schools and high schools. Finally, the Commission requests new operational funding of \$130,000 to hire an assessment specialist to guide the process of setting passing scores on the WASL and to expand its capacity to research specified critical accountability issues.

These recommendations for the short 2002 session are intended to continue the incremental progress of education reform implementation in preparation for consideration of a comprehensive state accountability system in the full-length 2003 session.

I. Progress of Schools and School Districts

A. Remarkable Progress Achieved in 4th Grade Reading

In 1998 the Legislature passed Second Substitute House Bill 2849 (2SHB 2849). This legislation directed schools and school districts to set numerical performance improvement goals for fourth grade reading as measured by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

The reading improvement goals called for districts to reduce the percentage of their students not meeting the standard by at least 25 percent over a three- to four-year period ending with the 2001 WASL. Districts using their 1997 results as a baseline had four years to make the gains, while those using a 1998 baseline had three years.

The goals as they applied to schools were similar to the way in which they applied to districts.

In addition to requiring these improvement goals, the state of Washington has made a concerted effort over at least the last five years to support improved teaching and learning in elementary reading.

Since 1996, over \$30 million has been allocated directly to the improvement of reading instruction and performance for Washington students. These efforts include funding grants to help primary teachers improve reading instruction and to identify best practices; providing for an oral reading assessment of all second grade students and funding professional development for teachers to properly administer the assessment; funding for professional development and grants for instructional materials for K-2 teachers; and creating an intensive volunteer tutoring program (Washington Reading Corps) for students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

The impressive results in student achievement speak for themselves.

Of the state's 1,190 elementary schools that reported data, 1,013 schools (85.0 percent) had eleven or more students eligible to be assessed in their baseline year (either 1997 or 1998) and in 2001. Of these schools, 633 (62.5 percent) met their reading improvement goal.

There are 296 school districts in the state. Every year, however, the number of districts required to report their fourth grade reading assessment results fluctuates due to

changes in the number of students eligible to be assessed. In 2001, there were 50 school districts that were exempt from reporting assessment results due to insufficient numbers of students eligible to be assessed. Thus, there were 246 school districts with sufficient numbers of students to set reading improvement goals for 2001. Of these school districts, 160 (65.0 percent) met their reading improvement goal.

It should be noted that there were 47 districts that set more ambitious goals than were required by the state. Of these districts, 13 did not meet their goal but did make enough improvement that they would have met the goal had they set the state-established minimum as their target. Thus, 173 of 246 districts (70.3 percent) made at least a 25 percent improvement in the number of their students meeting the reading standard for fourth grade.

The success of these efforts are underlined by additional facts, including:

- Three out of every four students in the fourth grade who are eligible to be assessed are enrolled in districts that met their goals; and
- Of the districts that met their goals, the average improvement was an astonishing 43.6 percent reduction in the number of students not meeting the standard.

B. Creation of goals, support programs helped generate progress

Research concerning motivational theory in the context of educational accountability systems conducted by University of Washington graduate student Gregory Shiring at the request of the Commission outlines the critical elements of goal-setting theory and expectancy theory. According to this research, “Goal-setting theory says that individuals will be motivated to act if the organization identifies clear goals, and if they believe that goals are understandable, achievable, and worthwhile.” Expectancy theory states that “[I]ndividuals will be motivated to act if they see a clear link between their own effort and achievement of a goal, and if they see a link between achievement of that goal and receipt of a reward that is meaningful to them.”

The Shiring study describes research conducted in Kentucky that asked teachers to rank several listed intrinsic and extrinsic rewards related to accountability. The highest ranked reward was “personal satisfaction from improved student performance.” In second place came “personal satisfaction from meeting performance goals.”

The performance improvement goals established by the Legislature appear to have been designed in a way that is highly consistent with motivational theory and with survey information about what gives educators satisfaction.

- The goals appear to have been sufficiently clear;
- Educators can see a link between what they do and the achievement of the goals;
- The goals were achievable (70 percent school districts actually made enough progress to have reached the goal);
- Achievement of the goals are widely viewed as worthwhile and meaningful to both children and educators; and
- They tap into both of the two strongest sources of satisfaction (in the Kentucky study) – improved student performance and meeting performance goals.

It is difficult to imagine what trends might have emerged had Washington's public schools not been given these performance improvement goals and the other supporting programs to boost reading achievement. Fortunately, we do not have to imagine the dramatic improvements that actually occurred – they are plain for all to see and will benefit many children for a lifetime.

II. Progress of the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission

A. System Recommendations

The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission was formed in the Fall of 1999, and worked over the course of the ensuing 14 months to develop accountability system recommendations according to the Legislature's specifications in RCW 28A.655.035. Following a summer-long series of public forums held across the state to seek input from educators and the entire community, the Commission deliberated at length from August through October. In November of 2000 a final report was approved by the Commission, and submitted to the Legislature, the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education.

The Commission was asked to put the system recommendations into legislative form; in other words, into the form of a bill. In response to this request, the Commission contracted with an independent consultant with extensive experience drafting and analyzing legislation to review Commission staff work on early drafts of the legislation. The consultant, Sherie Story, analyzed both the Commission's Accountability System Recommendations report and the bill draft developed by Commission staff, and issued a report with recommendations. The independent consultant found the draft bill to be consistent with the Accountability System Recommendations. The consultant made a number of technical recommendations for changes to the bill, and a few more substantive suggestions.

The Commission's Executive Committee reviewed the consultant's report, and worked through a series of three drafts of the bill, before finally approving language for submission to the Legislature. The language was introduced, at the request of the Commission, the Governor and the State Board of Education, as House Bill 1562 and Senate Bill 5625.

During the legislative session when consensus on the bill proved elusive, the Commission was asked by legislators to attempt to offer bill language that would be

acceptable to the Commission, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Governor. In response to that request, agreement was reached on April 6 between the three agencies.

While the legislation was not enacted in 2001, the Commission appreciates the dedication and the extraordinary amount of effort that legislators invested in attempting to forge legislation. The Commission recognizes that a complex challenge is rarely resolved in the first session the Legislature attempts to address such an issue. Commission members look forward to working with legislators and others to achieve passage of a comprehensive accountability system.

While much of the Commission's efforts in 2001 were focused on participating in and monitoring legislative activity surrounding the accountability system recommendations, action occurred on a number of other fronts as well.

B. Goals

The Commission is charged with adopting performance improvement goals in reading, writing, science and mathematics, as it deems appropriate, after assessments in these subjects are required statewide. Through Senate Bill 5418 enacted in 1999, the Legislature set 4th and 7th grade math goals, which were scheduled to take effect in 2001. However, the Legislature at the same time specifically authorized the Commission to modify the performance improvement goals they had set forth through SB 5418. When it adopts these goals, the Commission must use the rule-making process; it also must present the goals to the education committees of both the House and Senate before the goals are implemented and at such a time as the Legislature would be able to take statutory action, should it deem such action warranted.

Through December and January, the Commission worked to develop draft goals. As part of that process, staff from school districts around the state (especially staff with expertise in assessment, but also other staff) provided detailed input and suggestions.

In response to the Legislature's interest in remaining closely apprised of the Commission's thinking and intentions regarding goals, the Commission presented to the Legislature in February its draft rules concerning the goals. Following these legislative presentations and additional public hearings, in April the Commission adopted

performance improvement goals for reading and mathematics at grades 4, 7 and 10.
(WAC 3-20-100)

The three-year goals will all employ the same baseline year – the 2001 results on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The goals will call for the same magnitude of improvement as the Legislature called for in the first round of goals. Both schools and school districts will have goals to reduce the percentage of students not meeting the standard by at least 25 percent from the 2001 baseline to the 2004 results.

In a change from the previous goal provisions, WAC 3-20-100 provides that school-level goals will need to require the same 25 percent improvement that applies to districts. However, the rule enables the state Superintendent of Public Instruction to grant a waiver from this requirement, enabling a school to have a less ambitious goal, if deemed appropriate. The rule further provides that for any future state accountability purposes, the state minimum improvement would be used, not the actual goal set locally, if the goal is more ambitious than required by the state.

School districts face a December 15, 2001 deadline to establish their goals.

As a result of the Commission's adoption of the goals, for the first time since passage of House Bill 1209 in 1993, high schools will have performance improvement goals. In addition, 7th grade reading goals are also now required for the first time. And in modifying the provisions of the goals the Legislature had created two years ago for mathematics in 4th and 7th grades, the Commission removed the option to select a baseline from among three to four different years. The Commission was striving for clarity and consistency in requiring all the goals to begin with the same baseline year and thus also allow the same period of time to make the desired level of improvement.

C. Assistance Criteria

The Commission is required under RCW 28A.655.030(1)(d) to adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify schools and school districts in need of assistance and those in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet state standards. Anticipating state-funded focused assistance would begin with the 2001-02 school year, the Commission adopted such criteria in November, 2000. The criteria include nine related to elementary schools and eight related to middle or junior high schools. (The criteria appear in the “Accountability System Recommendations,” Tables 2 and 3 on pages 22 and 23.)

Since accountability legislation was not passed in 2001, these criteria are not in use in precisely the same way or context envisioned in the statute. However, funding was appropriated to OSPI through a budget proviso for focused assistance. OSPI has used these criteria and additional criteria to assist in determining which schools and districts will be eligible to receive focused assistance beginning in the 2001-02 school year.

In addition, OSPI has determined that these Commission-adopted criteria will be used in administration of the federal Title I program to identify schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress. In so doing, OSPI has taken an important step toward unifying what would otherwise be two distinct (federal and state) programs intended to serve accountability purposes. As the federal accountability system evolves, and a state accountability system is created, it is hoped this progress in developing a coherent single system of school accountability can be sustained.

D. Successful Schools Advisory Committee

Another of the Commission’s duties (RCW 28A.655.030(1)(c)) is to adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify successful schools and districts. In June the Commission began consulting with educational organizations and associations and other community groups to assemble an advisory committee. The committee was appointed during the summer and began meeting in August, under the leadership of Kevin Laverty, a school director in the Mukilteo School District.

After meetings through the fall, the Committee submitted a report to the Commission in November with recommendations. (For copies of the report, please contact the Commission office.) The recommendations emphasize all four subjects tested on the WASL, both achievement and improvement, results over both one-year and three-year time periods, the percentage meeting standard, the learning improvement index, level one in reading and math, and norm-referenced tests in grades 3, 6 and 9. They also include a “distinguished” level of recognition beyond the “regular” standard of recognition.

The Commission appreciates that the committee worked hard over a relatively brief period of time to develop a report. The Commission has taken the recommendations under advisement, and will address the subject in 2002 in conjunction with its deliberations and research concerning a comprehensive accountability system.

E. Detailed Assessment Reporting

WASL results released in September of 2001 are more detailed than previous years’ results. Test results this year included, for the first time, disaggregated scores for limited English proficient (LEP) students. Previous years’ reports included the numbers of such students in our state – but did not disaggregate their scores on the WASL. Commission staff advocated publication of these data because disaggregated assessment results for this and other groups of students are vital information. Our state’s limited English proficient students are estimated to number 70,332 in the 2001-02 school year. (However, this count only includes students currently being served in the state’s transitional bilingual education programs, and do not represent the total number of students who have not yet achieved *academic* proficiency in English as defined by virtually every national standard. It does not include students who at one time were in ESL programs but are no longer participating in such a program. It may further understate the number of LEP children by not including those who have dropped out of school.) These students represent a tremendous challenge for our schools if all children are to reach high academic standards.

Reports of WASL results also include, for the first time, the Learning Improvement Index. Students who take the Writing and Listening tests either meet the

standard or do not. Unlike with the Writing and Listening tests which only have two levels, reading and mathematics scores on the WASL are categorized within four levels. The four levels are used to calculate an index that measures progress – not just with respect to the standard – but also with respect to both:

- progress from well below the standard (level 1) to below the standard (level 2); and
- progress from meeting the standard (level 3) to exceeding the standard (level 4).

Thus, the index is a more precise measure of progress than the indicator of percent meeting or not meeting the standard.

A number of school districts have informed the Commission over the past year that the index enables them to demonstrate progress at a finer level of detail than reports that only include the percentage meeting standard. In view of this concern and other factors, Commission staff encouraged OSPI to publish the learning improvement index with the 2001 results. OSPI was responsive to Commission suggestions in that the learning improvement index results have been reported.

F. Achievement Gap Research

The Commission began in 2001 to explore the achievement gap in Washington schools. (The Center on Education Policy, a national independent advocate for public education, defines the “achievement gap” as “the finding that African American and Hispanic [and Native American*] students score lower on standardized tests, on average, than White and Asian students.”)

[* Native American children were not included in CEP’s definition, but should be included where there are sufficient numbers of such children.]

Nationwide, the statistics are startling. For example, the Center on Education Policy reports the following (“It Takes More Than Testing,” 2001):

On the 1999 reading trends test of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the average score of Black students at age 17 was roughly the same as that of White students at age 13.

In science, the average score for Hispanic 9-year-olds was the equivalent of more than three grade levels behind that of White 9-year-olds.

The Commission's staff analyzed data on previous results of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) by race and ethnicity. Data files made available to the Commission by OSPI (under a formal data sharing agreement between the two agencies) contain racial/ethnic information at the student level. For a description of the findings of these analyses, see sections III and IV of this report.

Unfortunately, the particular data files provided to the Commission do not have, at the *student* level, information pertaining to the student's participation in the free and reduced-price lunch program. The Commission does have school level data on the numbers of children participating in the free and reduced-price lunch program. However, since these data are not linked with the student level assessment results, the **achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students has not yet been analyzed** by the Commission.

The Commission intends to explore this issue through further analyses of additional data and work with OSPI staff to document the achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students.

III. Findings

A. Achievement gap is large, persistent, unacceptable

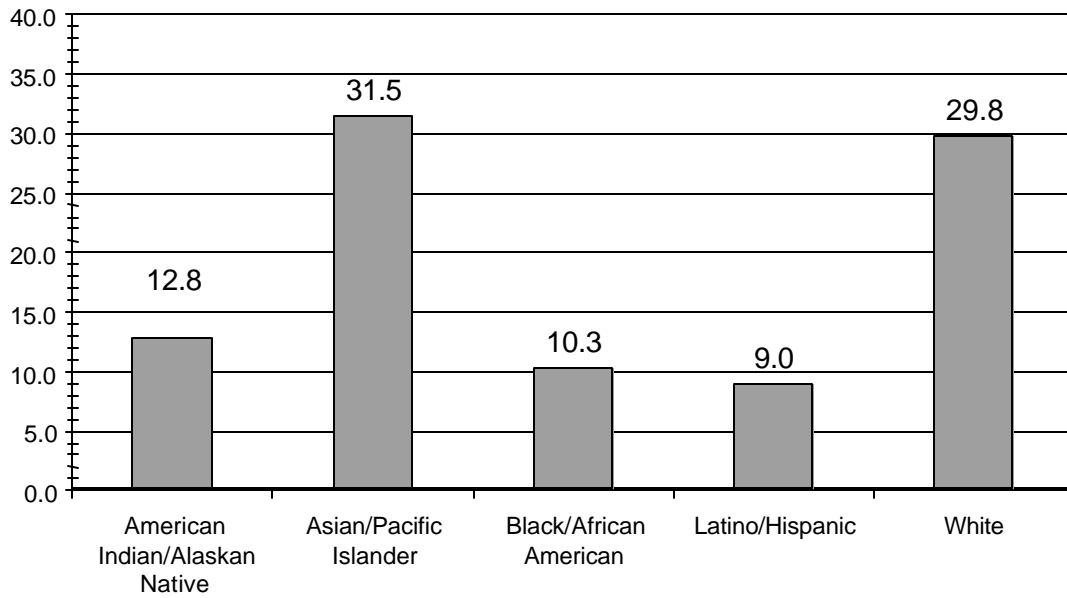
1) Achievement Gaps by race/ethnicity

The Commission's analysis of the percentage of students in each racial or ethnic group meeting standards on the WASL reveals a broadly consistent pattern. Just as with national test data, African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American achievement levels are substantially below those of White and Asian/Pacific Islander students.

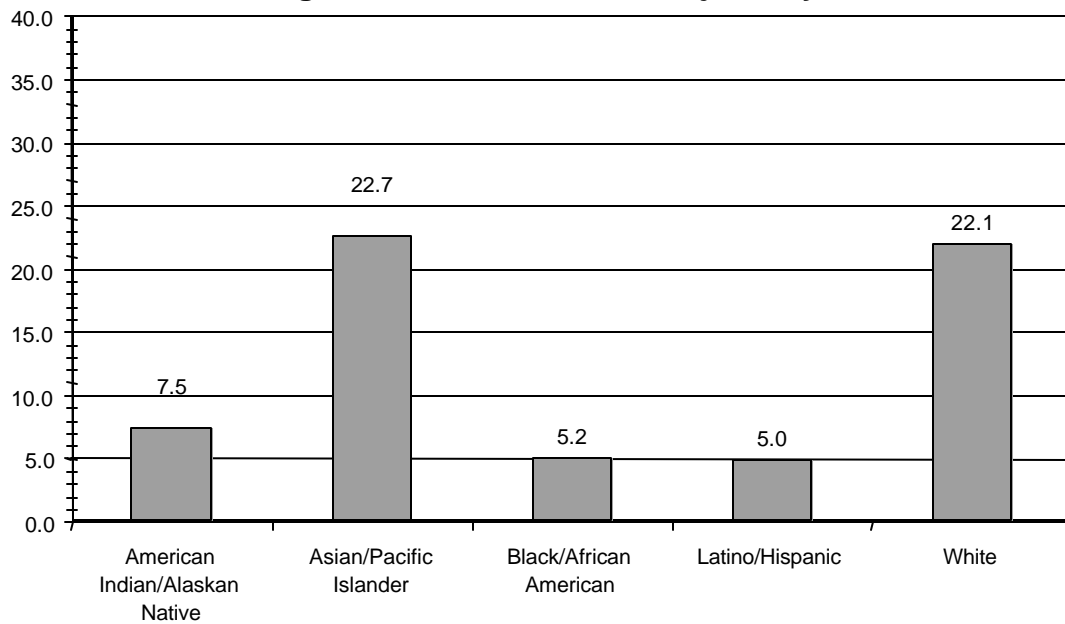
From 1997 to 2001, the trends observed in the achievement gaps vary, depending on grade and subject, from gradual reduction (4th grade reading) at one extreme, to no significant change, to at the other extreme gaps that are actually increasing (4th grade math). For more detail on this analysis, please see section IV of this report concerning recommendations.

The achievement gap is also readily apparent in the racial/ethnic breakdown of the percentage of students who meet the standard in all four subjects tested on the WASL. For instance, in 2001 for the 4th grade, White and Asian/Pacific Islander students met the standard in all four subjects at a rate around three times greater than that of students from the other three reported racial/ethnic groups. In 7th grade the gaps are smaller. But in the 10th grade, which is getting so much attention because of the certificate of mastery graduation requirement for the class of 2008, they are larger.

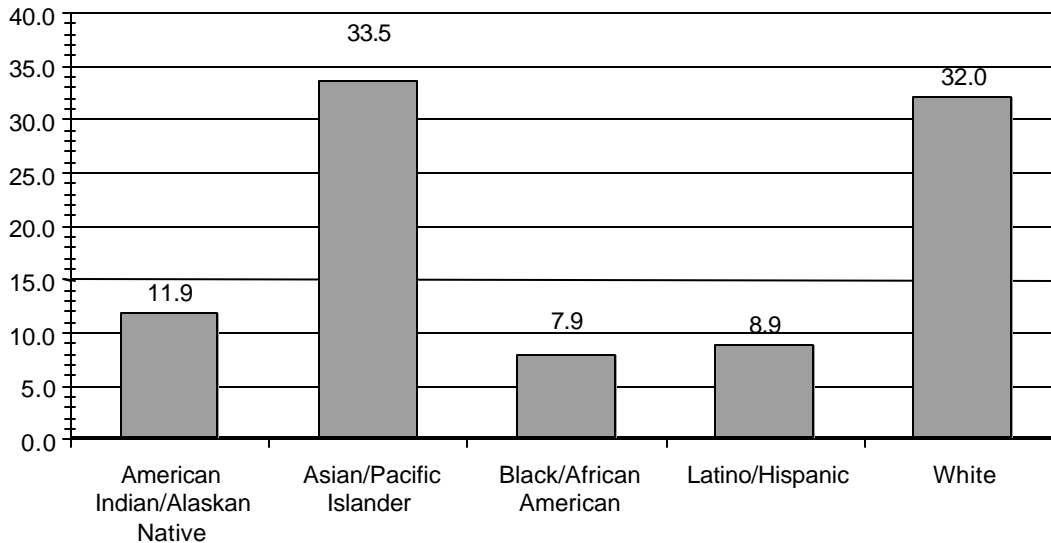
**4th Grade Student Achievement on 2001 WASL
Meeting Standard in All Four Subjects by Race/Ethnicity**



**7th Grade Student Achievement on 2001
Meeting Standard in All Four Subjects by**



**10th Grade Student Achievement on 2001
Meeting Standard in All Four Subjects by**

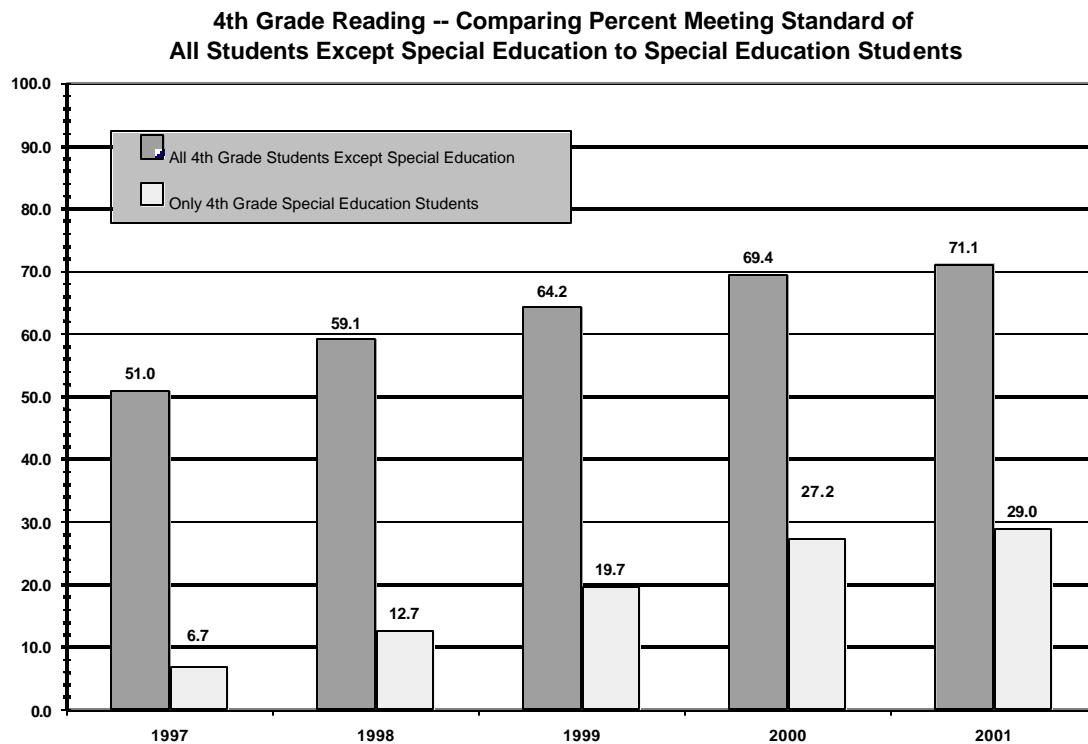


2) Achievement Gaps by disability status, Migrant status

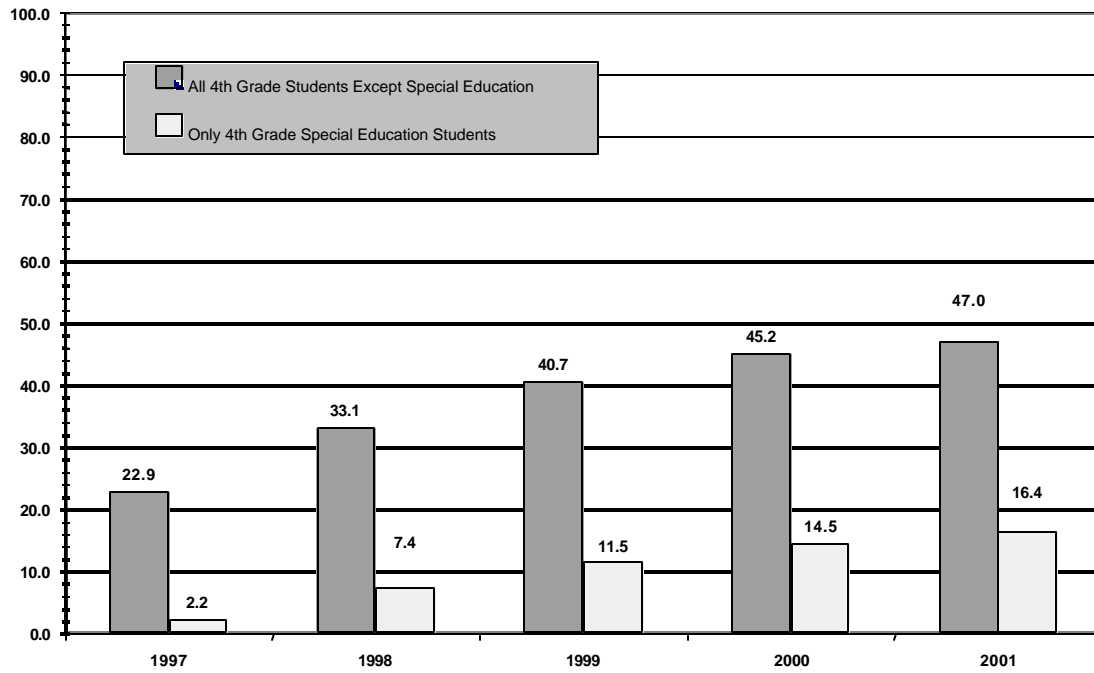
[Note regarding interpretation: Readers of this report are urged to judiciously interpret the data presented in charts depicting test scores among students in special education programs, programs for migrant students, and programs for students with limited English proficiency. While important information can be found in comparisons of students who are in such special programs with students who are not, these comparisons are not to be taken as evaluations of the effectiveness of the programs or the staff working in the programs. The comparisons primarily describe the level of need of the students participating in the programs. By their very nature, these programs are not intended for general education students. Rather, they are intended to serve students with needs and challenges beyond and in addition to the challenges facing students in the general education program.

Students with greater needs would be expected to have lower *initial* test scores. Over time, when students achieve academic success and leave these programs, they are no longer counted within the targeted program's enrollment. This phenomenon can mask the success the program may have had in helping the student achieve. Since the student might now be enrolled in the general education program, an observer who is not carefully

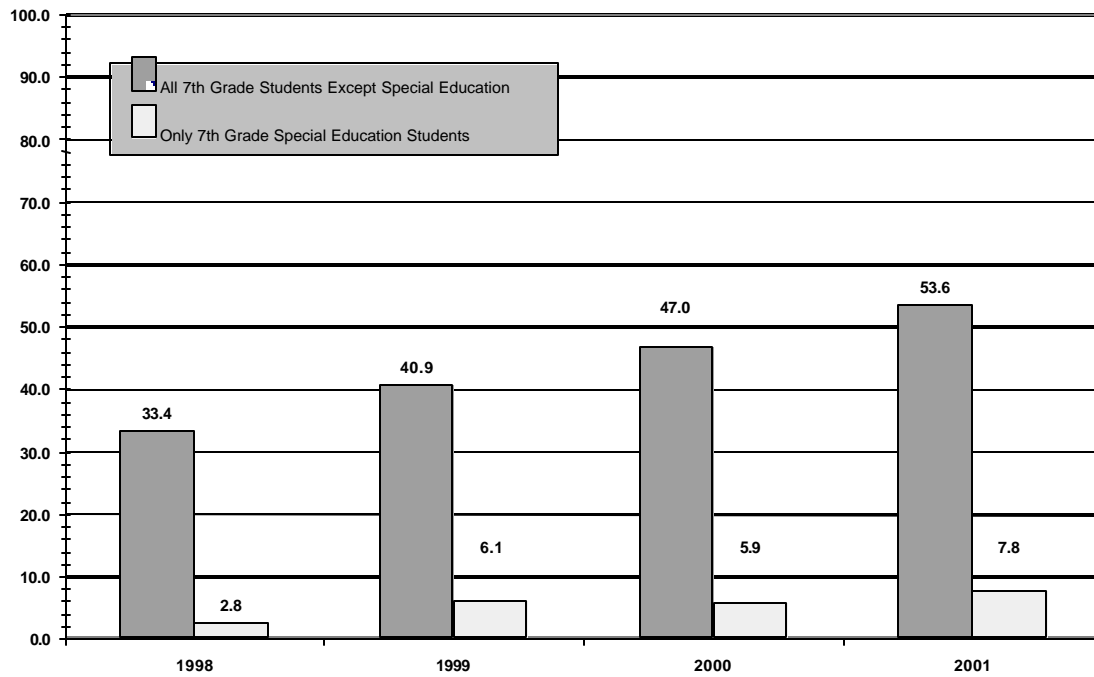
interpreting the data might mistakenly attribute such a student's success to the *general* program he or she just entered, rather than the *targeted* special programs he or she was in for the past few years. Thus, by virtue of the fact that these programs are designed to serve children in greater than average need, they should not be expected to show achievement results that are identical to results for students who are not in any of these programs. Indeed, it's unclear what the purpose of the programs would be if there was no initial difference in the achievement levels of students based on disability, limited English proficiency or migrant status.]



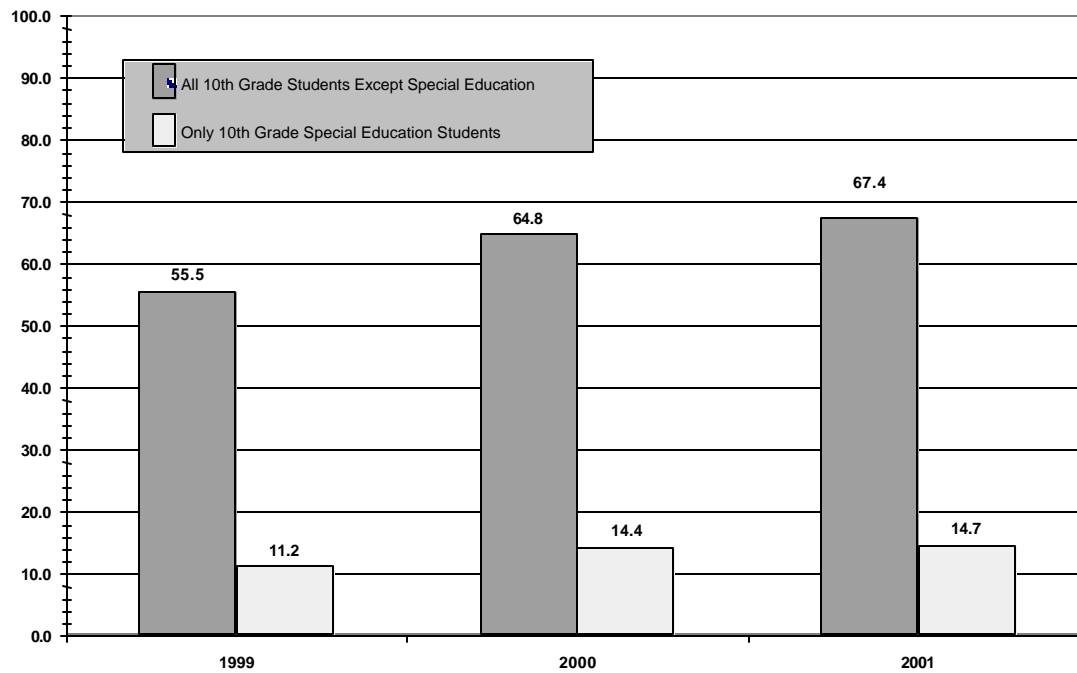
**4th Grade Mathematics-- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Special Education to Special Education Students**



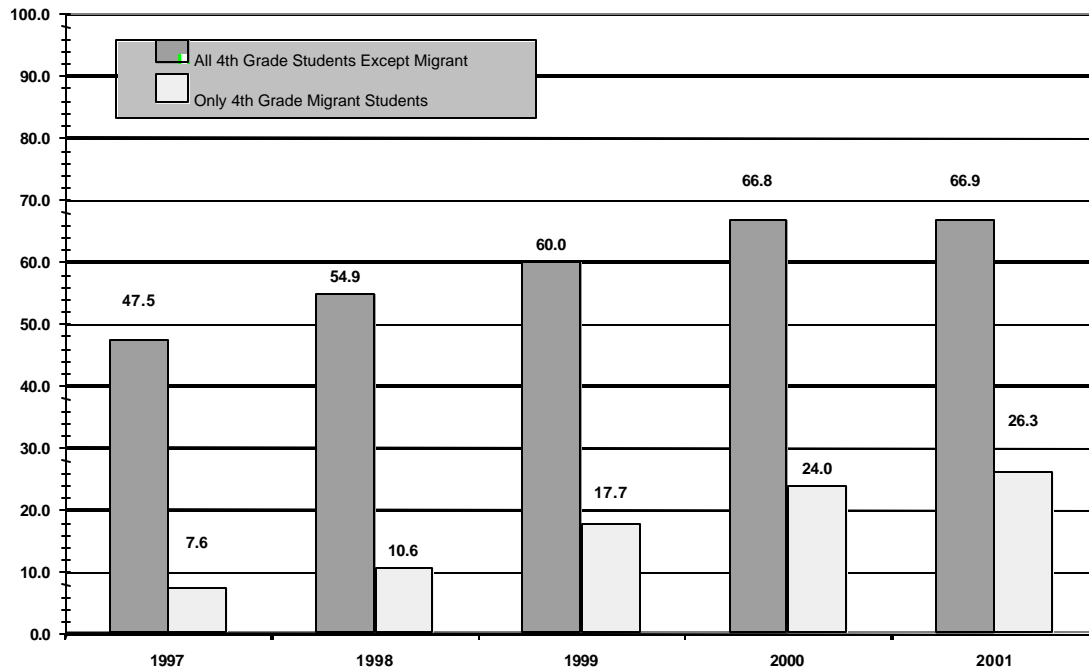
**7th Grade Writing -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Special Education to Special Education Students**



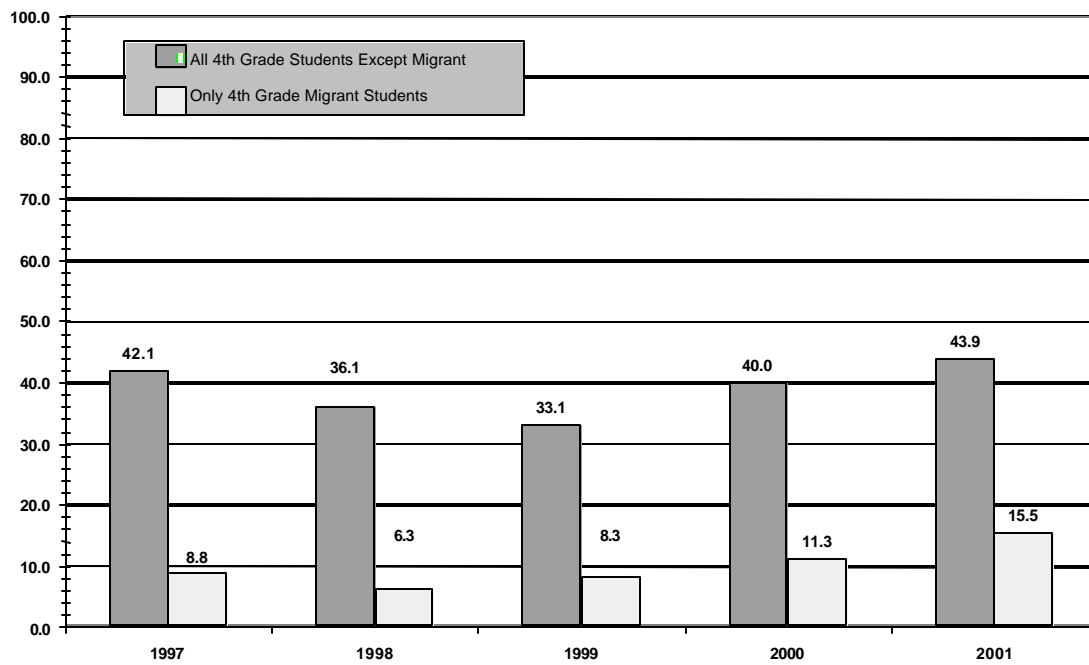
**10th Grade Reading -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Special Education to Special Education Students**



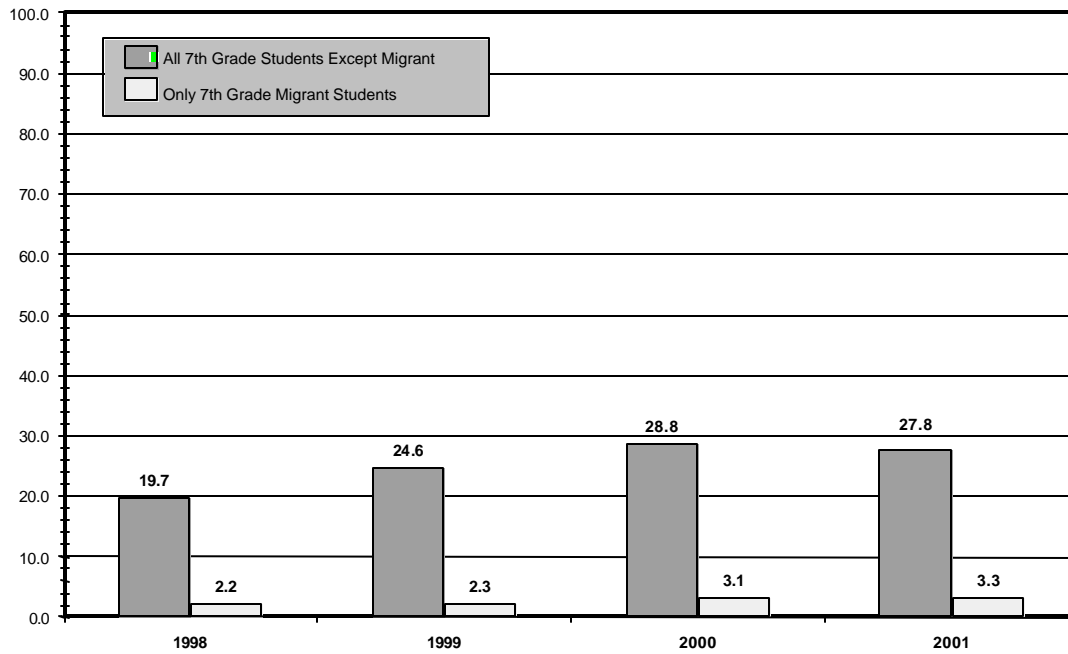
**4th Grade Reading -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Migrant Students to Migrant Student**



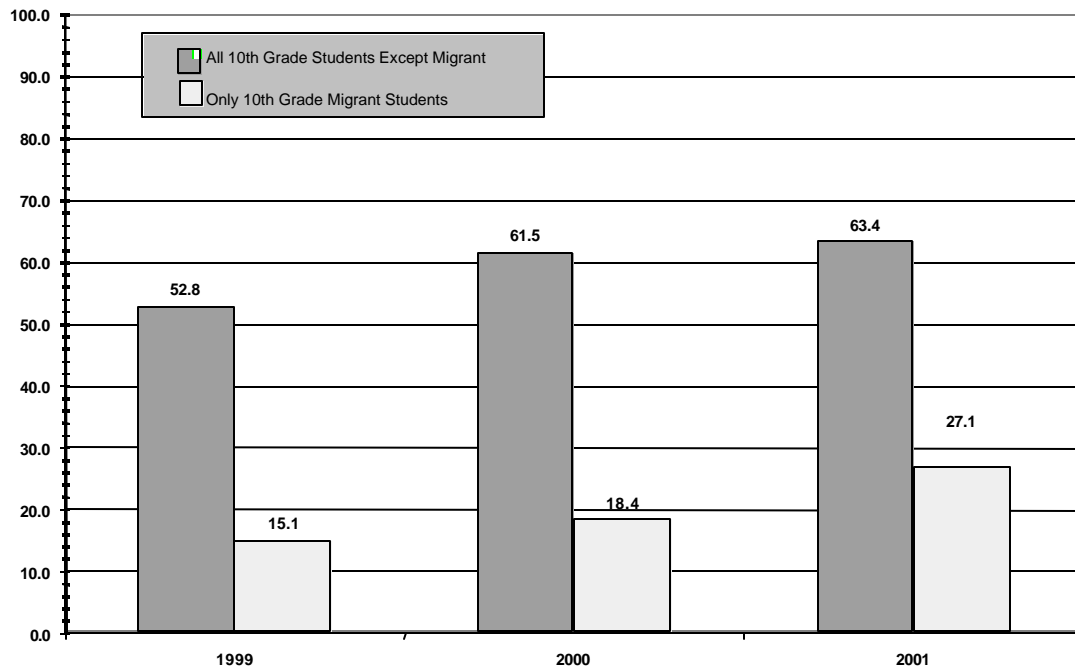
**4th Grade Writing -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Migrant Students to Migrant Student**



**7th Grade Mathematics -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Migrant Students to Migrant Student**



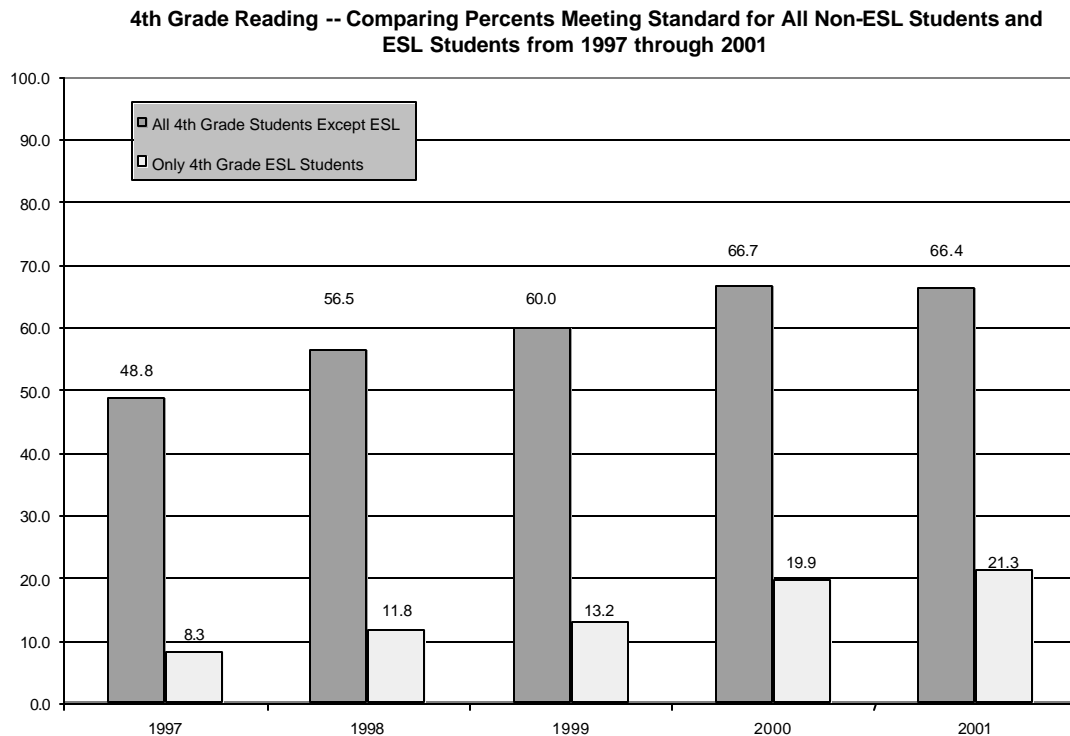
**10th Grade Reading -- Comparing Percent Meeting Standard of
All Students Except Migrant Students to Migrant Student**



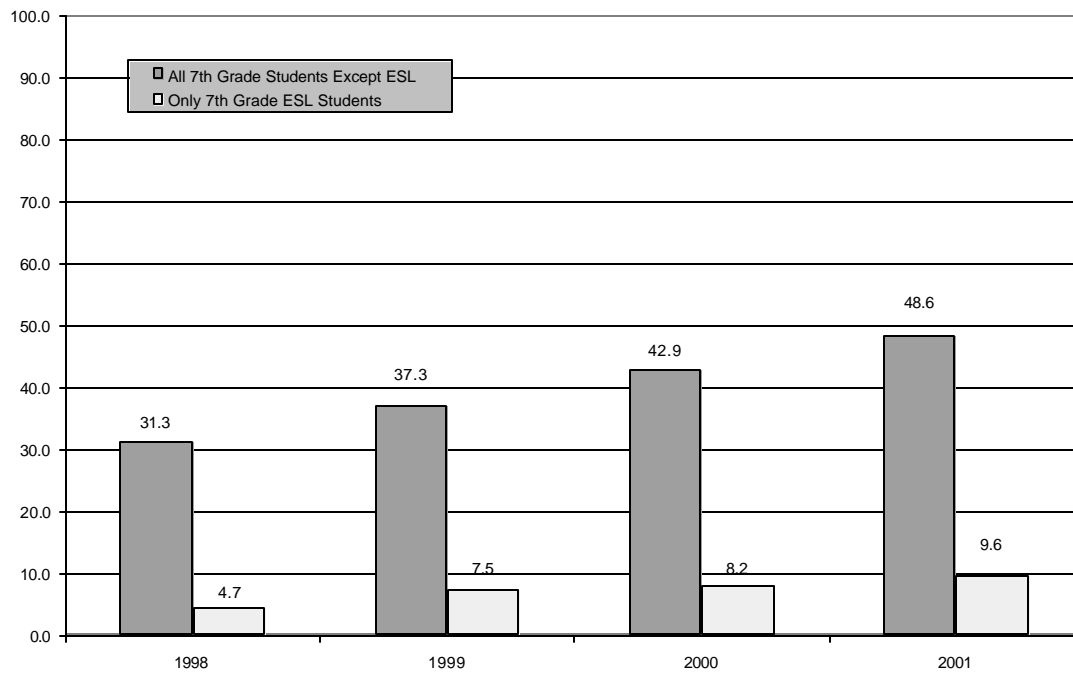
B. English Language Learner Results

A significant component of the achievement gap relates to children with limited English proficiency (LEP). The official estimate of LEP students (which is conservative because of funding, early-exit program considerations, and other factors) in the 2001-02 school year is 70,332 some 7 percent of all students. A much higher percentage of students from one of the lowest scoring groups – Hispanic/Latino – are LEP students. Spanish is the primary language for roughly 5 out of every 8 LEP students in Washington (“Educating Limited-English-Proficient Students in Washington State,” OSPI, Dec. 2000).

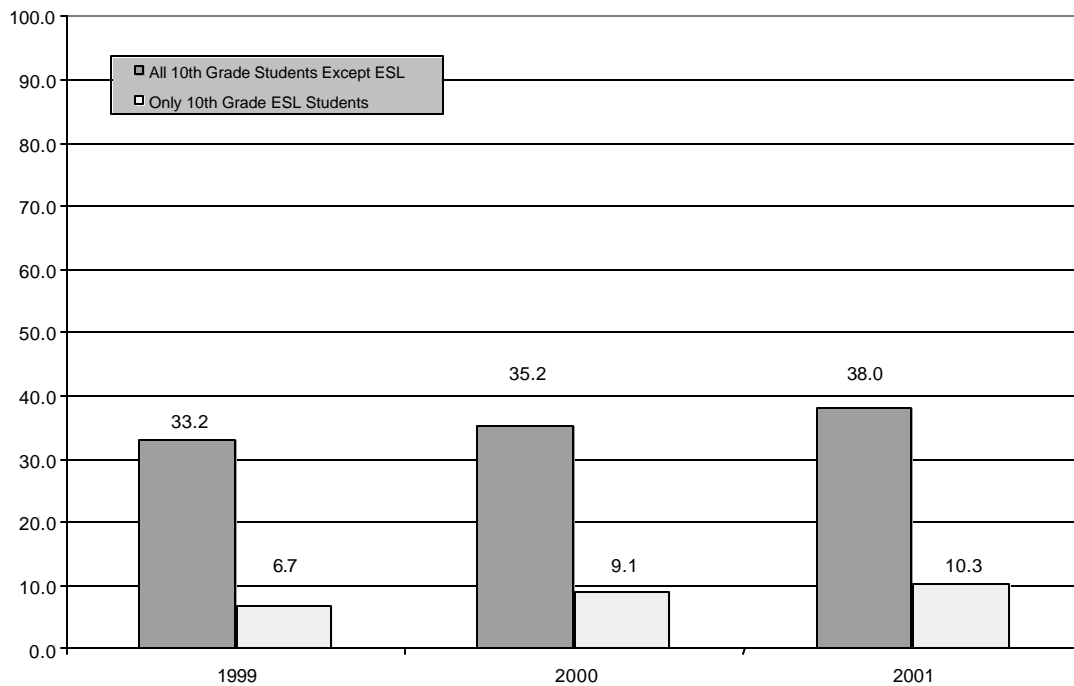
The gap between LEP and non-LEP students on the WASL is enormous. For example in 2001, while 68.7 percent of non-LEP students met the standard in 4th grade reading, just 24 percent of LEP children met the standard. This gap of 44.7 percentage points compares to a gap of 39.3 percentage points for 7th grade writing and 28.2 percentage points for 10th grade mathematics.



7th Grade Writing – Comparing Percents Meeting Standard for All Non-ESL Students and ESL Students from 1997 through 2001



10th Grade Mathematics – Comparing Percents Meeting Standard for All Non-ESL Students and ESL Students from 1999 through 2001



C. Accountability in the 2001 Legislature

While accountability legislation was not enacted in the 2001 session of the Legislature, tremendous effort was expended attempting to achieve that goal. The Senate and the House both passed very different legislation during the regular session. The Senate passed a bill on two occasions, including during the waning days of the second special session in June.

Although the bills passed by one or the other house differed to some degree from recommendations advanced by the Commission, the Commission deeply appreciates the long hours and sincere effort dedicated to this cause by legislators, legislative staff, and the representatives of educational organizations deeply interested in this issue.

The legislation recommended by the Commission envisioned that the first step in any accountability system's consequences for low performance over a period of time would be state assistance to help the school or district boost learning. Termed "school improvement assistance," that initial help for a struggling school or district should be the state's first step in such situations.

Even though a bill was not passed, the Commission thanks the Legislature for taking that first step this year – with passage of funding in the budget to provide assistance to struggling schools.

D. State delivers focused assistance funding

The Commission appreciates the Legislature's action to make \$2.8 million available for focused assistance to struggling schools. The funding was appropriated to OSPI to administer. The U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education have made \$3.1 million in accountability grants available to OSPI. Together, these funds amount to a significant commitment by lawmakers to assist struggling schools, and are flexible enough to allow OSPI considerable latitude in administering the program in the manner it deems appropriate.

At the request of OSPI, Commission staff compared WASL, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) test results for

elementary and middle schools with the assistance criteria adopted last year. This analysis by Commission staff was intended to determine how many, if any, of the assistance criteria each elementary and middle school had met. Based on this and additional information gathered by OSPI, OSPI determines which schools and districts are to be offered the opportunity in the 2001-02 school year to participate in voluntary focused assistance.

The Commission applauds the OSPI for working toward a single, coherent system in which state and federal programs use, for funding purposes, the same criteria for determining which schools may be in need of assistance. OSPI, in its administration of the federal Title I program, has aligned that program's criteria for adequate yearly progress to match the focused assistance criteria adopted by the Commission. However, the federal program also uses the criteria to determine schools that did not make adequate yearly progress (using *three*-year rolling averages). Any school that meets five or more of the criteria for two consecutive years is identified under the Title I program. The state program does not use the criteria in this fashion – namely, to identify schools for lack of progress. Both the OSPI developed and implemented program of focused assistance and the federal program, for purposes of funding determination, incorporate additional criteria beyond the 9 elementary and 8 middle school criteria adopted by the Commission.

In early October, the OSPI contacted school districts with schools that were eligible to apply for the program. Applications for assistance were received by OSPI by November 1, 2001. Twenty five elementary and middle/junior high schools were selected to participate in the program beginning this school year.

Each of the 25 schools will participate in a school improvement process which features the following components:

- A School Improvement Facilitator – The facilitator works with the school district, school, and a School Improvement Team (the team includes school and district staff, parents, and community members) to develop a plan to address identified needs and to prepare and implement a jointly developed performance agreement between the school district and

the SPI. OSPI selected 21 School Improvement Facilitators to work with one or two schools.

- An Educational Audit – The School Improvement Team, and a team of five outside peer educators and experts, are in the process of completing an educational audit. The educational audit will identify the school's strengths and challenges to improving student performance. It will explore such things as the school's curriculum, leadership, instructional resources, assessment results, allocation of resources, parental involvement, support from the central office, and staff, parent, and student perceptions. Educational audit reports will be shared at a community meeting during March.
- A School Improvement Plan – Based on the Educational Audit findings, and input from the community, the School Improvement Team will develop a School Improvement Plan. Funds for planning time related to the development of the school improvement plan will be provided.
- Performance Agreement – Once the school improvement plan is completed, a two-year Performance Agreement will be jointly developed by the school district and the OSPI. The agreement will identify specific actions the school district, the school, and the OSPI will take to implement the school improvement plan. The agreement will also include a timeline for meeting implementation benchmarks and student learning improvement goals.

E. Accountability: Education reform's unfinished work

Important as it was to take the first step by providing focused assistance this year, all the reasons for creating a comprehensive state accountability system remain. In 1993 when Washington embarked upon the journey of education reform, accountability was from the very beginning envisioned as the final piece of the puzzle.

Though in some ways the most difficult element, accountability has always been assumed to be an indispensable component to standards-based education reform in states throughout the country. Already two of every three states in the U.S. have established

such systems. The process of fundamentally changing how educational services are structured, delivered and how their effectiveness is evaluated is a wrenching process for educators to go through. If the policy components of the system are not designed in such a way as to reward and recognize success on the standards, on the one hand, and to identify and address areas in need of improvement, on the other, then a fundamental disconnect exists at the core of the system.

Thus, the need for an accountability system is as great or greater this year than it was last year.

However, the Legislature is facing a short session and a budget situation more bleak than any in almost 10 years. Given the difficulty of reaching consensus on this issue last session, it is unrealistic to expect resolution of these tough policy and budget issues in the 60-day 2002 session.

Therefore, the Commission finds that the most productive approach may be to take a number of incremental steps in 2002, and let passage of comprehensive accountability legislation await the next full-length biennial budget-writing session of the Legislature in 2003. The year 2002 will give the Commission and other organizations the opportunity to develop a stronger foundation of information and consensus upon which to base the decisions to be made in 2003 about what our state's accountability system should provide.

IV. Recommendations

A. Short term recommendations

The Commission has been charged with the responsibility to establish performance improvement goals (RCW 28A.655.030(1)(a)). However, the Commission believes the promise of these goals, and indeed of standards-based reform itself, is fundamentally jeopardized if African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and economically disadvantaged students are left behind or if the focus on their achievement is obscured in aggregated results for average achievement across the entire student population.

The smallest achievement gap among racial/ethnic groups in reading or math in 2001 was a 19.7 percent gap for Native Americans in 7th grade math. The largest gap in 2001 was the 31.8 percentage points separating White and African-American students in 10th grade math.

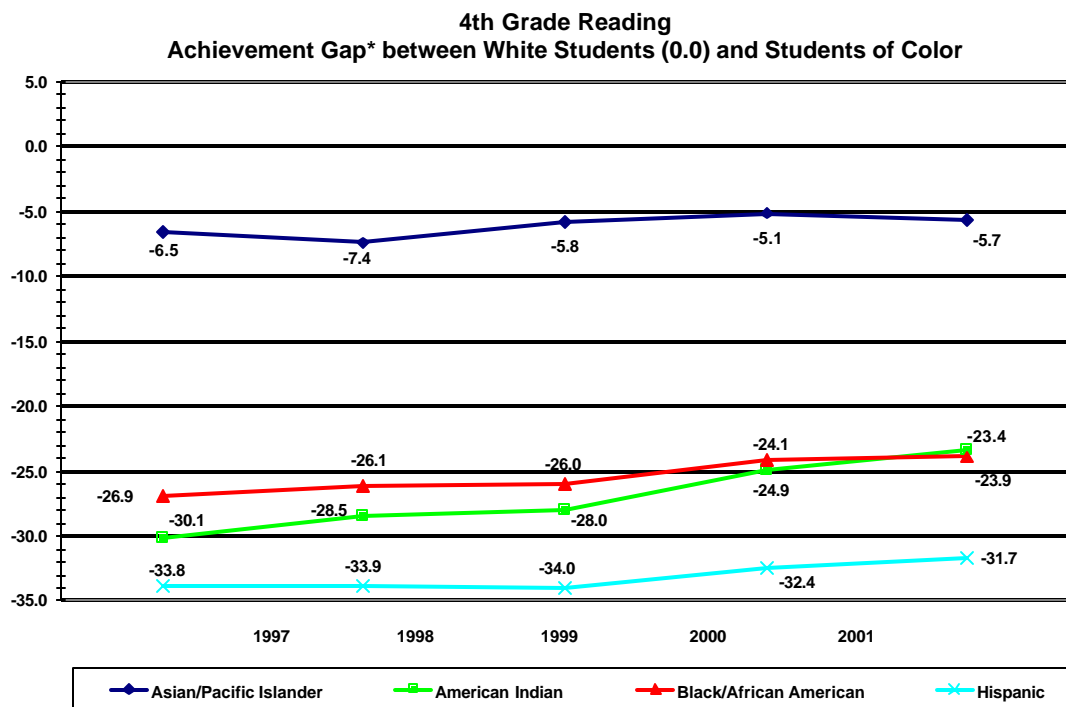
1) Recommendation

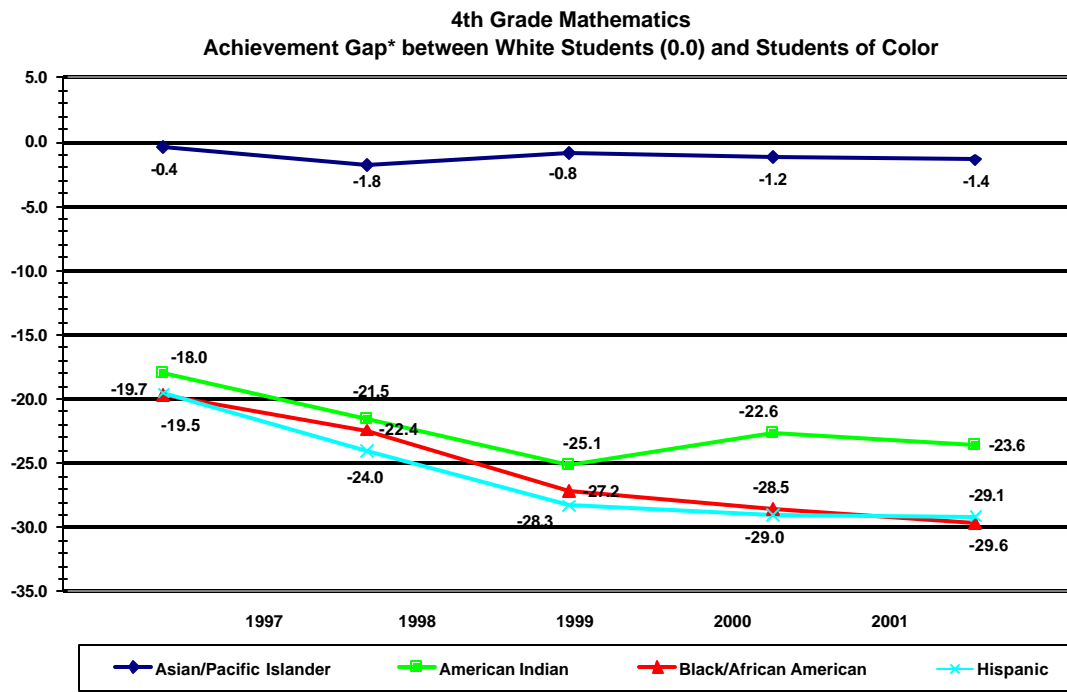
- **The Commission recommends that the Legislature modify the Commission's authority to set performance improvement goals in order to clearly allow the goals to relate not solely to school-wide and district-wide averages of all students, but also to apply to each significantly sized sub-group of students who are presently disproportionately underachieving.**

The Commission's *Accountability System Recommendations* report of November, 2000 included this recommendation. Thus, it was also part of the legislation considered in the 2001 session. The Commission is not recommending attaching to these goals or to the dropout goals discussed below in the legislation for 2002 any particular consequences one way or the other. Whether the goals are met or not should not carry any significant state-level consequences at this time. While the lack of consequences may partially undermine the power of the goals, the mere existence of the goals is likely to generate additional focus, efforts, and perhaps results in improving academic achievement for students who have been lagging far behind.

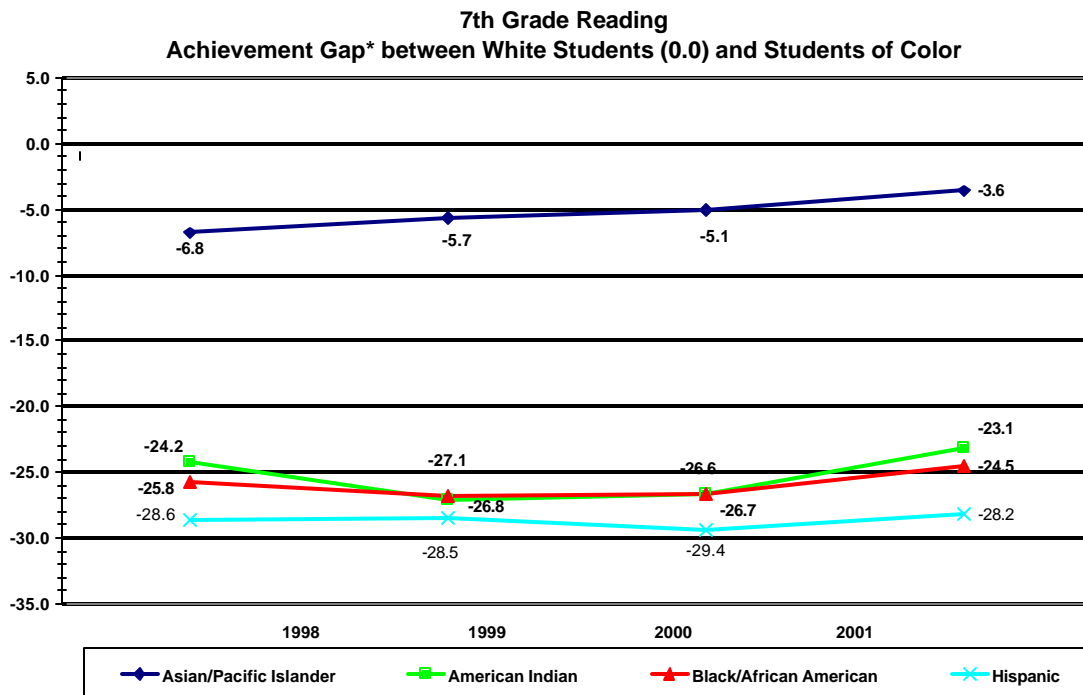
Since the WASL was launched in 1997, the trends observed in achievement gaps have differed for various subjects and grade levels. Some existing trends are positive. For example, in 4th grade reading the gaps were slightly reduced. The gap between White and Native American students narrowed from 30.1 percentage points to 23.4 in just four years. At this rate, the gap would close in 2015. This reduction of the gap by 22 percent is the largest gap reduction observed over this period. Unfortunately, the rest of the picture is not nearly so hopeful.

For Hispanic/Latino students, the 4th grade reading gap narrowed from 33.8 percentage points to 31.7 from 1997 to 2001. At this rate, this gap would close in approximately 2062. So while some progress has been made, the gaps remain enormous even in 4th grade reading -- which has had the benefit of so much focus, grant funding and professional development efforts.

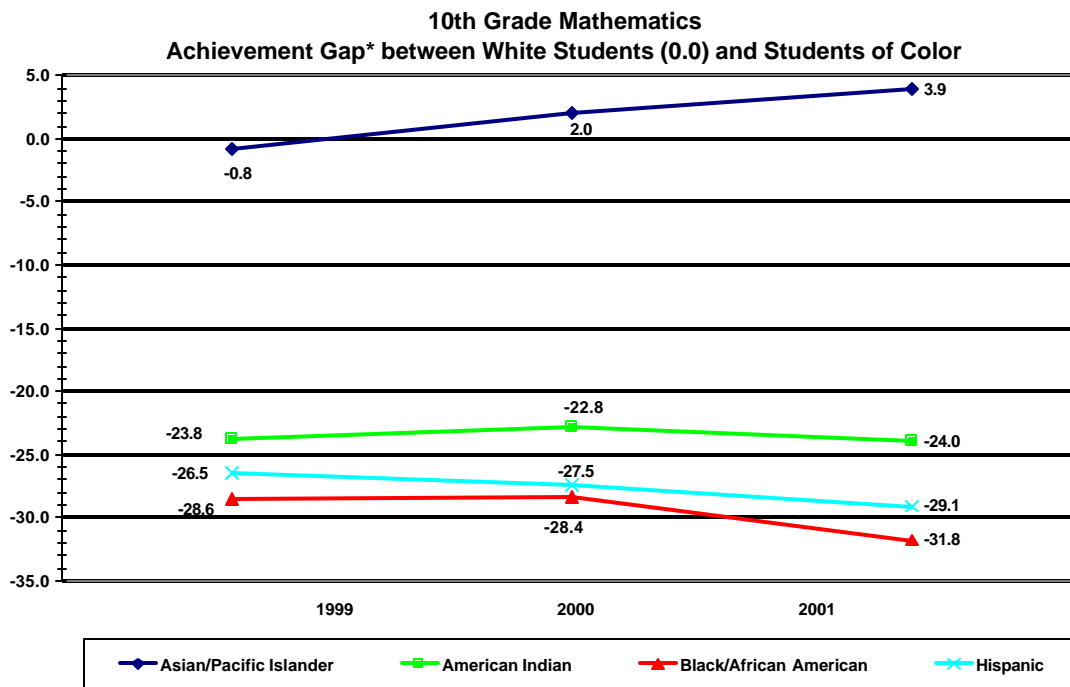




* Percentage point difference in percents of students meeting standard.



* Percentage point difference in percents of students meeting standard.



* Percentage point difference in percents of students meeting standard.

Unfortunately, some of the gaps are actually increasing. For all three racial/ethnic groups that score far lower, the 4th grade math WASL gaps grew from 1997 to 2001. The increases ranged from 5.6 points higher for Native Americans to 9.9 points higher for African-American students. Between 1998 and 2001, the gaps in 7th grade reading each declined, though only by very small amounts. The gaps in 10th grade math ranged from essentially unchanged to somewhat larger.

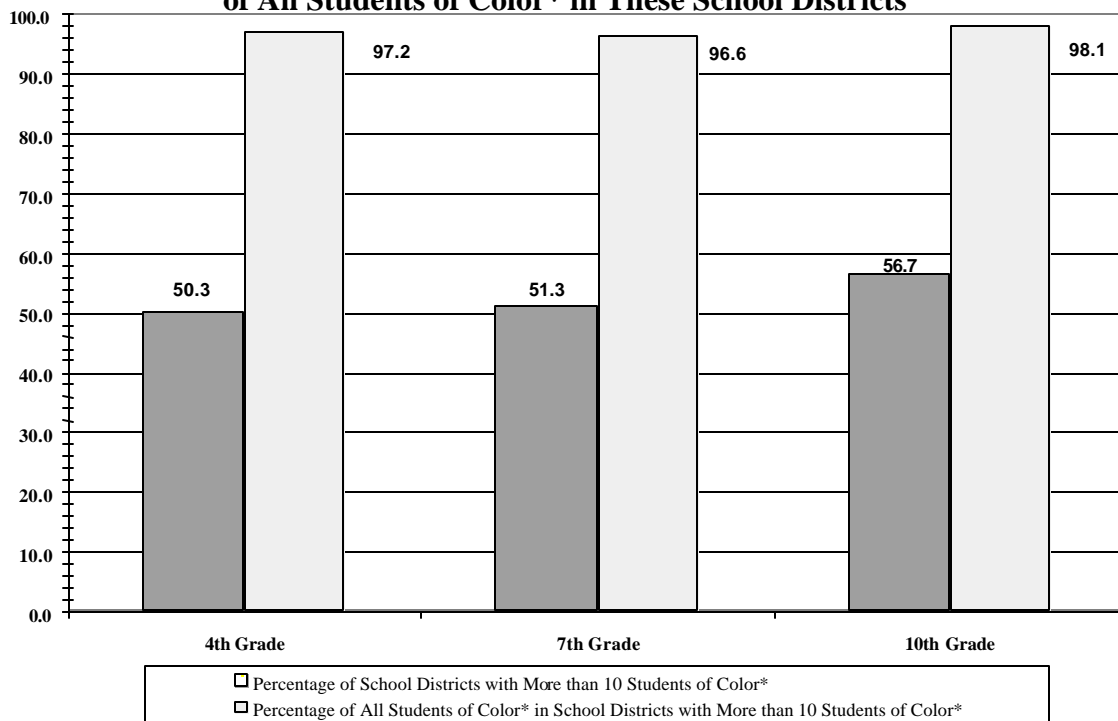
The achievement gap is a factor of significant and still growing importance in state accountability systems across the nation. According to the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, of the 33 states with state-defined accountability systems, 10 states address performance differences by including subgroup performance in their accountability systems. Six states (Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Rhode Island and Wisconsin) consider the extent to which schools narrow the achievement gap when measuring progress of schools. Texas and New Mexico include subgroup performance in their measures of adequate yearly progress. And other states are including subgroup performance in their rewards programs (including California, Maryland, South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana and New York).

Current law provides that assessment results shall not be publicly reported when the group of students numbers fewer than 10 (RCW 28A.655.090(7)). Many schools and districts do not have 10 or more students in each of these racial/ethnic subgroups. This fact has been asserted at times as support for the notion that district-level and school-level goals for subgroups of disproportionately underachieving students are not feasible in our state.

In an effort to evaluate this concern, Commission staff analyzed the distribution of and concentrations of students from the various racial and ethnic backgrounds. The results seemed to confirm the notion that goals for each distinct racial/ethnic subgroup would not be feasible based on how small the numbers are in most buildings and districts.

However, the Commission staff also analyzed the results when students from the disproportionately underachieving racial/ethnic groups are aggregated. In other words, the Commission staff investigated the feasibility of goals for disproportionately underachieving students based on aggregating the numbers of African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American students. The results are depicted in two charts below. In essence, according to this analysis, district goals appear feasible because 97.2 percent to 98.1 percent of the students from these three racial/ethnic groups are enrolled in districts in which there are more than 10 such students in a WASL-tested grade.

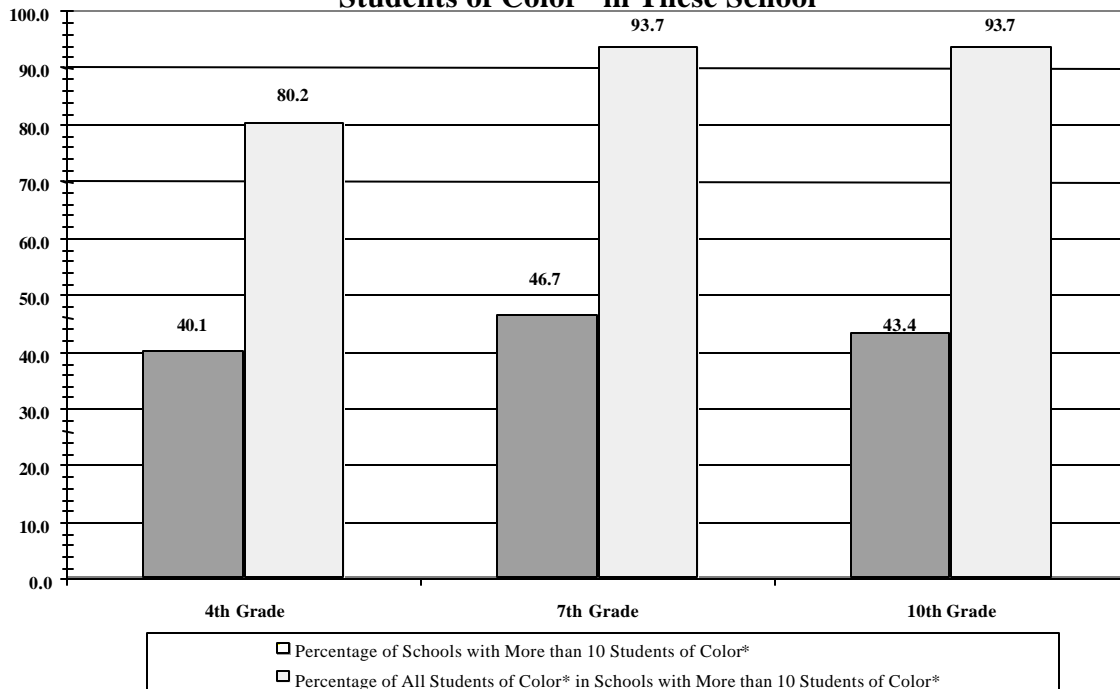
Percentages of School Districts with a Combination of More than 10 Students of Color* (African American, Native American, and Latino/Hispanic) and Percentages of All Students of Color* in These School Districts



*Does not include Asian/Pacific Islander

Derived from Oct. 2000 P105

**Percentages of School with a Combination of More than 10 Students of Color*
(African American, Native American, and Latino/Hispanic) and Percentages of All
Students of Color* in These School**



*Does not include Asian/Pacific Islander students.

Derived from Oct.2000 P105

While district goals of this nature would apply to between about 50 to 57 percent of school districts in the state, nearly all such students would be included in the goals under this approach. Goals at the *school* level would not encompass quite as high a proportion of the students, as 80.2 percent to 93.7 percent of students are enrolled in a *school* with more than 10 students of African American, Hispanic/Latino or Native American backgrounds.

2) Recommendation

- **The Commission recommends that the Legislature extend the Commission's goal-setting authority to permit adoption of goals for reducing the dropout rate in secondary schools (that is, middle schools, junior high schools and high schools).**

Anecdotal indications frequently suggest a danger that the dropout rate could increase significantly or perhaps dramatically as education reform is increasingly implemented. Worries are often heard regarding the challenging performance standards expected on the WASL, particularly in the context of plans to make the high school assessment a graduation requirement for the class of 2008.

Some educators have expressed the fear that the 7th grade assessment is challenging enough that it could lead some students (who may not understand the purpose of the assessment) to consider dropping out before they reach high school.

The Commission believes our state's school improvement efforts must not leave behind those students who may be at risk of dropping out – for whatever reason.

In addition, from the standpoint of oversight for the accountability system, improved assessment results must not come at the cost of including fewer students in our schools. In other words, if a situation were to ever occur in which dropout rates jumped significantly and as a result reported average test scores rose (because only the better-prepared students were being tested) the system would be inadvertently misleading educators and the public about our progress.

Thus, to ensure the reliability of our assessment reports, our state needs to know much more than it presently does about our current dropout rates. And Washington state educational leaders must be equipped to monitor future trends in dropout rates. (OSPI is working with a contractor to develop a unique student ID code – not based on the social security number – that is an arithmetic algorithm based on the student's name, date of birth and gender. The student code will be linked with a core student record system, that will consist of 28 data elements already being collected at OSPI. OSPI then would be able to link these data with other sets of data, such as the WASL data. A pilot is now scheduled for Fall of 2002, with full implementation, originally scheduled for the 2002-03 school year, now set for Fall of 2003.)

Authorization of dropout goals will provide the visibility, focus, and, it is hoped, the informational infrastructure to begin to address the dropout problem and to be vigilant in monitoring its future directions.

3) Recommendation

- **While the Commission recognizes there are extremely difficult budgetary constraints facing the Legislature this year, in order for education reform to move forward the Commission requests an increase of \$130,000 in its annual operating budget appropriation. This request would be used to support Commission operations in three areas.**
 - a. The Commission would hire an assessment specialist by January of 2003 to supply the independent technical expertise needed in order for the Commission to make sound decisions on middle and high school science assessment cut scores by the summer of 2003. (\$53,000)**
 - b. The Commission would fund research (likely through contracting and leveraging non-state sources) to provide a more solidly data-based foundation for adopting disproportionality and dropout goals, for understanding the achievement gap, and for supporting other elements of the 2002 workplan, such as analysis of the use and impact of I-728 funds. (\$48,000)**
 - c. Public involvement and communication outreach activities would be undertaken, again likely through contracted services from the private sector. (\$29,000)**

B. Long-term recommendations

As stated above, the need for a state accountability system to support continuous improvement in our public schools remains. Over the course of the coming year, the Commission urges the Legislature, the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and all interested observers to keep in sight and in mind the future goal of completing the state-level components of standards-based education reform as laid down in the landmark House Bill 1209.

The Commission is not in a position at this time to state what it believes that future comprehensive accountability system should provide. However, the future system should follow some broad principles that have been the focus of extensive deliberation.

During the heat of the debates in the 2001 session, legislators asked the Commission to attempt to work with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Governor to see if the three agencies could agree on specific bill language that all would support.

In response to this request, the three agencies did reach agreement on specific bill language. However, this milestone was not reached until rather late in the regular session (April 6) and was reached under the pressure of deadlines and circumstances which no longer obtain. As a result, the previously agreed upon specific language is valuable primarily to the extent that it embodies certain principles that should be considered very closely when work eventually resumes on the development of the accountability system.

Those principles may be said to include:

- The Commission adopts goals for disproportionality and dropout rates.
- SPI provides data to the Commission for analysis.
- The Commission adopts criteria for identifying struggling schools; SPI negotiates performance agreements.
- Districts may decline assistance, but could be required to develop improvement plans; assistance may become mandatory if the criteria are still met.
- SPI convenes a team to conduct needs assessment and design improvement plans; public input is considered as part of the process.
- SPI evaluates progress under the performance agreement.
- Disposition of the performance agreement (to end, continue, or replace with intervention) is decided by Commission, after recommendation by SPI.
- SPI determines intervention strategy.
- Comprehensive list of authorized state intervention strategies is enumerated.
- Student transfer within district (and between districts if accepted by non-resident district) is authorized in schools under intervention.

While these principles grew out of the Commission's original Accountability System Recommendations, they are the product of numerous additional forces and influences. The Commission regards these ideas as a sound framework for development of an accountability system in the future.

The Commission intends to focus on four primary goals for 2002. They are:

- 1) Development of the disproportionality and dropout goals;
- 2) Documentation of the achievement gap and the dropout rate in Washington, and identification of strategies that have been effective in reducing the achievement gap and the dropout rate;
- 3) Compilation and analysis of information concerning other states' experiences with performance incentive and state intervention programs; and
- 4) Initiation of focused and intentional public involvement efforts to better inform and include educators and the broader community in accountability efforts.

More detail on these activities is included in section V of this report. These plans are intended to help the public school system, state policy-makers and others work toward creation of a state accountability system – the last major segment of the state's school improvement efforts. When that milestone is reached, the Commission will be in a position to actively plan for its own elimination.

V. Commission 2002 Workplan

A. Current law

The workplan springs from language currently in law regarding the purpose and duties assigned to the Commission. In brief, they are as follows:

General purpose: oversight of K-12 accountability system (RCW 28A.655.020(2))

Specific functions: The Commission's duties under the statute "include, but shall not be limited to" these items

- 1) Performance improvement goals
- 2) WASL cut scores
- 3) Review assessment reports; make recommendations to SPI
- 4) Assistance criteria
- 5) Success criteria
- 6) Identify schools and districts in need of state intervention, after a set of intervention strategies are authorized by the Legislature
- 7) Annual report on progress on performance improvement goals
- 8) Annual report of findings and recommendations
- 9) Identify performance incentive systems that have or may improve student achievement
- 10) Receive districts reports on use of I-728 funds and progress in student achievement with these funds (First reports due August 31, 2002)

Some of the above duties are ongoing. Some, though completed, could be revised in the future. Some have not been completed or attempted yet.

The duty to set WASL cut scores cannot be carried out without additional resources. However, the Commission could delay the hiring of an assessment specialist until perhaps as late as January, 2003. The middle and high school science assessment cut scores must be established in the summer of 2003. Additional assessment cut scores must be established in each of following three years (finishing in the summer of 2006).

Since the Commission's duties are not limited to those listed, it is free to investigate any subject within its broad mandate, provided the resources can be made available.

Draft Workplan: 2002

Primary goal: Work toward a comprehensive state accountability system

Intermediate goals: Establish expectations for schools, school districts, and for each student group; and
Provide oversight of assessment and reporting systems

B. Top priorities for 2002

- Develop Disproportionality & Dropout Goals
- Research Achievement Gap
- Reward/Intervention research
- Public involvement outreach with educators and community

1. Disproportionality & Dropout Goals

The authority to set these goals would extend the current duty of the Commission to adopt performance improvement goals (RCW 28A.655.030(1)(a)). The reason current authority is inadequate is that the goals already authorized are not extended to each subgroup of students who historically have achieved academically at much lower levels. The reason for applying the goals to the subgroups of students is to ensure that no group of students is left behind as overall or average improvement occurs. In addition, if goals allow for the possibility (as the current goals may) that a school or district could improve their scores by experiencing a big jump in their dropout rate rather than by improving student learning, to that extent the system lacks integrity and creates damaging unintended side effects.

This additional authority is being requested by the Commission from the Legislature in 2002. OSPI and both the state associations for school directors and central office administrators are increasing their focus on achievement gap issues. The Commission should be prepared to act with deliberate speed if and when the authority is granted in law. Although consequences for achieving or not achieving the goals would

not yet exist, the goals will provide focus and visibility for these critical problem areas. These goals would represent incremental progress toward a state accountability system, thus supporting the primary goal articulated above.

2. Research Achievement Gap and Dropout Issues

Conducting research on the achievement gap and dropout issues will directly support the Commission's work on the disproportionality and dropout goals (which relates directly to the mandate found in RCW 28A.655.030(1)(a)). It would be done with available Commission staff resources and, if OSPI staff are available, those resources as well. Existing and any new Commission operating appropriations and any available non-state resources would also be used to contract with research organizations to bolster this effort. National research on the achievement gap, for example, is available, but little research that relates directly and specifically to Washington state exists. This research would be designed to document the extent of the achievement gap and the dropout rate and any discernable trends, identify schools and school districts where the gap and/or the dropout rate have been significantly reduced, identify strategies used in any such successful efforts to reduce the gap or dropout rates, and to provide programmatic and policy options for local and state leaders to consider implementing to address these issues.

The existence of a large, persistent and unacceptable gap in the academic achievement of students from different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds is a primary rationale for having a state accountability system. The gap nationwide has been well documented for decades. There is little evidence the gap is closing to any significant degree. Many unanswered questions surround the size and nature of the dropout problem. With the coming advent of performance-based accountability systems, developing the capacity to carefully monitor dropout trends will become critical if the system is to be accurate and fair, and to avoid unnecessary harm to young people. Thus, research on these issues that clearly identifies the size of the problems and possible solutions will provide significant support to the primary goal, by helping demonstrate the need for an external state accountability system for K-12 education.

3. Reward/Intervention research

RCW 28A.655.030(1)(f) directs the Commission to identify performance incentive systems, while 28A.655.035 and 28A.655.030(1)(h) direct the Commission to make recommendations regarding increasingly intensive intervention strategies for low-performing schools. This focus directly responds to these statutory requirements.

One of the most important barriers to passage of accountability legislation last session was the uncertainty many legislators felt about intervention. There were many questions about what interventions had been attempted in other states, and what the effects of them had been. There was also uncertainty about how many states allow interventions, and what types of interventions are allowed by states or by federal Title I provisions. Compiling research and informing the public on this topic will answer a number of vital questions that currently pose a formidable barrier to enactment of comprehensive accountability legislation in Washington.

However, a system that provides for negative consequences following failure, but does not provide for positive consequences following success seems incomplete, out of balance, or even unfair. While the Commission has investigated this topic, a concrete, final recommendation has not been adopted. The Commission decided to further consider financial awards, and has not yet done so. Several states have experience with such programs; these experiences merit some further scrutiny.

Research on both topics will enable the Commission to lay a more solid foundation for the ultimate establishment of an accountability system, directly supporting the primary goal.

4. Public involvement outreach with educators and community

Many teachers fear “accountability” means their jobs are on the line. Many district administrators and directors seem to fear a loss of autonomy and limits on their control of local policies and programs. Classified staff fear the loss of collective bargaining rights. The debate over accountability rarely focused on improving student learning. Furthermore, 28A.655.030(1)(k) requires the Commission to seek advice from the public and interested educational organizations.

Misunderstanding and fear must be reduced before accountability legislation has real prospects of success. This problem cannot be addressed reactively. Existing and new resources (both state and non-state) must be focused on aggressive, proactive strategies to communicate key messages about accountability in order to successfully reduce misunderstanding and groundless fear. Achieving this will remove a major barrier to achieving the primary goal.

C. Second Tier Objectives

Given the very limited resources available, it is vital that Commission member and staff resources not be spread too thinly. This suggests a tight focus on the top four priority items, and the exclusion of nearly all other issues that do not directly support them.

A second tier of issues that the Commission intends to address to a limited degree that could still have some impact include:

- 1) Reviewing assessment reporting, accommodations, and exemptions; make recommendations to SPI on collection and reporting of data regarding:

- Dropout rates
- Attendance
- Mobility
- Alternative programs/Schools
- Highly capable programs
- Small schools
- Institutional programs

- 2) Analysis of use of I-728 funds and results in student achievement; and
- 3) Building understanding of assessment development, administration, scoring, and standard-setting processes.

Item number one above responds directly to the statutory duty to annually review assessment reporting and make recommendations. Item two, though vital, is described as a second tier priority because districts will not **begin** reporting to the Commission the results they are seeing from their I-728 funds until the end of August, 2002. So it would likely become a stronger focus toward the end of 2002 and into 2003. This work will become important in helping school districts make the case in favor of the huge jump in I-728 funding scheduled for 2004-05. Item three is recognized as critically important. The approach would be to gradually, over the course of 2002, build an increasingly stronger focus on understanding assessment issues, leading to a point where by 2003 it would be a primary focus. The emphasis on cut scores would build only very gradually because assessment staff would not be hired until January of 2003 and action would not be taken until 18 months from now, in the summer of 2003.

D. Resources

To attain the goals and objectives outlined in this workplan, current resources must be re-aligned to maximize their impact. In addition, new resources must also be obtained to accomplish the planned work.

1. Current Resources

The Commission's current resources are summarized as follows:

- a. \$322,000 annual operating proviso funding
- b. One FTE staff (Executive Assistant) transferred in 1999 from the Commission on Student Learning upon its sunset to the Accountability Commission through OSPI; and
- c. Statutory language requiring SPI to provide technical assistance, logistical support

2. New resources

The Commission plans to pursue acquisition of new resources from four sources.

- a. New state funding of \$130,000. Funds would be used to:
 - i. Hire an assessment specialist (starting 1/03) -- \$53,000
 - ii. Contract for targeted research (leveraged) -- \$48,000 (about equivalent to 0.5 FTE data specialist, per fiscal note HB 1562)
 - iii. Contract for public involvement/strategic communication support -- \$29,000
- b. Loaned executive, research or other staff time from partner organizations, for instance higher education, business, non-profit educational organizations, and professional associations.
- c. Matching grants from private and foundation sectors for targeted contract research.

- d. Interagency Agreement with OSPI for technical assistance and logistical support (not including assessment specialist).

APPENDIX

English Language Learner Program Effectiveness

The Commission analyses of the achievement gap in Washington have been described in the section of this report that includes findings of the Commission. The Commission's interest in exploring what factors might underlie the gap has led the Commission to take an interest in research concerning English language learners.

Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier of George Mason University have been studying issues surrounding English language learners for many years. According to *Education Week*, their federally funded research project is "among the largest to take a long-term look at such students." It appears to stand apart from, and qualitatively well above, most other research on this topic for a number of reasons cited by Magda Costantino, Ph.D., of The Evergreen Center for Educational Improvement ("Reading and Second Language Learners, 1999). Costantino reports the following regarding the Thomas and Collier research:

- *It provides "strong evidence" because it "avoided a number of the limitations inherent in much of the other research in this area."*
- *"The most significant difference between Thomas and Collier and other studies of the effectiveness of program models for ELLs [English Language Learners]" is Thomas and Collier's work "addresses students' entire school careers" while "other research in this area has generally focused on the early grades and has rarely tracked student achievement for longer than four years."*
- *They "only incorporated data from well-implemented examples of the various program models in order to reduce the confounding effects of implementation differences ... "*
- *By tracking the progress of over 42,000 students who attended the subject schools for four or more years, they limited the problems "that have undermined the validity of other studies."*

The Thomas and Collier study is based on student records spanning the period from 1982 to 2000. *Education Week* reports the authors themselves describe their findings as a best case scenario "since the study included only foreign-language speakers

who had been in the districts at least five years or who had already been formally schooled in their home countries.”

By the end of high school, students who started school knowing little or no English typically score at about the 10th to 12th percentile on English-language versions of national standardized tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Measured in terms of normal curve equivalents, which are described as more evenly spaced percentiles, the gap between these students and native English-speakers is 25 normal curve equivalents. This translates into about 75 months of schooling. (*Education Week*, April 25, 2001)

An earlier phase of the same research project (1997) reported findings on the relative success of various program models for helping English-language learners achieve academically. This particular study included over 700,000 students from five large urban and suburban school districts in various regions of the United States where large numbers of language-minority students attend public schools, and covered the period 1982-1996. The attached chart [Thomas and Collier Figure 6] shows the profound difference in academic achievement associated with the type of elementary school bilingual or ESL program offered to the children.

In summary, LEP students who received two-way bilingual instruction for 4 to 6 years in elementary school perform well above the average of native English speakers on 11th grade standardized tests in English reading. The authors state, “This is the most difficult test of all, as it correlates strongly at the 11th grade level with the reading test of the SAT, a college entrance exam. The reading test measures problem-solving and thinking skills across the curriculum.” (Thomas and Collier, 1997, pg. 52) Their findings “in science and social studies fall into the same general pattern.”

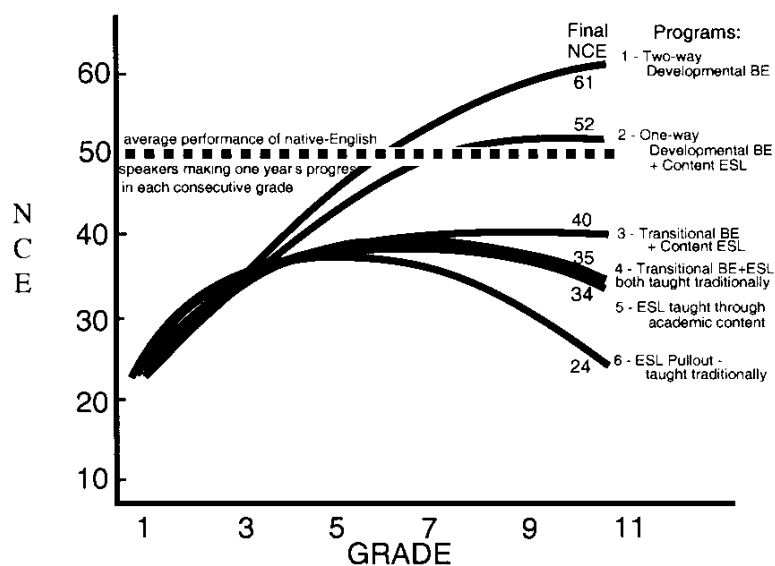
Figure 6

**PATTERNS OF K-12 ENGLISH LEARNERS'
LONG-TERM ACHIEVEMENT IN NCEs
ON STANDARDIZED TESTS IN ENGLISH READING
COMPARED ACROSS SIX PROGRAM MODELS**

(Results aggregated from a series of 4-8 year longitudinal studies
from well-implemented, mature programs in five school districts)

© Copyright Wayne P. Thomas & Virginia P. Collier, 1997

- Program 1: Two-way developmental bilingual education (BE)
Program 2: One-way developmental BE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 3: Transitional BE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 4: Transitional BE, including ESL, both taught traditionally
Program 5: ESL taught through academic content using current approaches
Program 6: ESL pullout--taught traditionally



© Copyright Wayne P. Thomas & Virginia P. Collier, 1997

53

Figure 6 from Thomas and Collier, 1997, is reprinted by permission of the authors.

The LEP students' achievement is at 61 normal curve equivalents by the end of 11th grade. This compares with a NCE level of 50, which describes the average performance of native English speakers at that grade level.

This two-way bilingual instruction model includes on-grade-level instruction in two languages for significant parts of each school day. The second most effective model,

late-exit bilingual education with *academic-content*-based ESL (rather than a *general English language* ESL focus) also yields academic achievement for LEP students that exceeds the average for native English speakers.

They found the most commonly used model is an ESL-pullout program for elementary school English-language learners. Over 50 percent of the students in the study received instruction through this type of program – the program model which was found to be the least effective of all six types. Another 30 percent of students had received one of the next two least effective program types. Just 10 percent of the students in the study had received one of the two most effective programs.

It is very important to note that, while the various program models don't show any significant differences in achievement effects in the early grades, the differences begin to emerge in 4th grade and reach huge proportions by the 11th grade. By that time, LEP students who received ESL-pullout instruction are scoring at the 24th NCE – essentially, no better off academically, compared to their native English-speaking peers, than they were when they started kindergarten with little or no English skills. Of course, they are also far below their peers who received instruction in more effective programs.

This research is relevant to Washington's achievement gap. What it seems to suggest is that a large component of the enormous achievement gap could be erased, or even reversed, with educational programs that have been demonstrated to be effective with English language learners. Unfortunately, the most effective programs for English language learners, according to this research, are among the least common program models in use in schools nationally, and the least effective program-type is the most common. It is not known whether this pattern holds for public schools in Washington as well. But clearly, school districts in our state and around the country that have significant numbers or percentages of English-language learners must explore every promising strategy for modifying their programs in the direction of the approaches this landmark research finds to be so spectacularly successful.